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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement* submitted by the Society for Threatened Peoples, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[24 August 2015]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights, including right to development

Human Rights Situation of Tibetans under China – Worse than Ever

On 8 June 2015, Beijing released a White paper titled 'Progress in China's Human Rights in 2014'. The white paper comes as a surprise or rather shock to human rights defenders across the globe with China's portrayal of existence of human rights and its so-called 'progress in human rights in its ethnic minority areas, especially those where Tibetans live.' China's blatant and flagrant violation of human rights in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and adjacent areas where Tibetans live is documented in various national and international reports. Despite various international pressures, China continues to breach all its obligations under various international human rights covenants to which it is a member state.

Tibetans' petition, street protest, peaceful assembly and demonstrations against the denial of their fundamental rights bring more arrests, torture and sentencing in Tibet. Consequently, Tibetans of all ages and walks of life across Tibet have resorted to a tragic act of self-immolations as a means to resist and protest Beijing's repression in Tibet.

Rising Number of Self-immolation Protests in Tibet

Since 2009, 141 Tibetans have self-immolated in Tibet. 122 of them have died on the spot or shortly thereafter. The whereabouts and condition of the surviving self-immolators remain unknown. All the self-immolators have unanimously called for 'freedom in Tibet' and 'return of their spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama.' However, instead of addressing the underlying grievances of Tibetans, Chinese authorities have responded to these tragic self-immolation protests with more repressive policies and dismissing the self-immolation as an "act of terrorism" instigated by so called the "Dalai Clique."

According to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), the self-immolation protests in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and adjacent areas where Tibetans live are directly related to China's effort to control religious practice and culture of Tibetans.

China's prosecutions of Tibetan self-immolation protests, which China thinks is a preventive measures to stop such protests, is actually compelling Tibetans to stage more of such protests. The last testimony¹ of Sonam Topgyal, 26, from Kyegudo, Yulshul Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture who self-immolated on 09 July 2015, said that the Chinese government implemented suppressive and repressive policies, demeaning religion, tradition and culture. When people voiced their truth and grievances to the superiors, instead of attending to them, they were met with further suppression and arrests.

Collective Punishment

Labelling self-immolation as an "act of terrorism" incited by the "Dalai Clique" the Chinese authorities have issued guidelines aimed at punishing family members and the relatives of the Tibetan self-immolators. The guidelines bar family members of self-immolators from travelling, applying for loans and licences, employment opportunities and governmental aid. In April 2013 the authorities in Dzoge, Nagaba Autonomous Prefecture, issued new rules extending criminal penalties to family members, fellow villagers, and monasteries of self-immolators. One of the clauses of the rule requires villages and monasteries to deposit Yuan 16,000 - 500,000 (USD 2499 - 78107) as deposit to ensure that no self-immolations occur and in case it does, the deposit is forfeited and a new deposit is required. Till date there are more than 53 known cases of Tibetans who have been sentenced to varying prison terms from 1 to 15 years under the alleged link with self-immolation protests.

Enforced Disappearance, Detention and Harsh Sentencing of Tibetan Religious Leaders

The Chinese government has intensified its effort to discredit religious leaders. Enforced disappearance, harsh treatment and detention of religious leaders are widespread in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and adjacent areas where Tibetans live. The 11th Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima has been missing since May 1995. Just three days after

¹ Sonam Tobgyal Died in Self-Immolation, <http://tibet.net/2015/07/sonam-tobgyal-died-in-self-immolation-updated/>

His Holiness the Dalai Lama named six-year-old Gedhun Choekyi Nyima as the 11th Panchen Lama, the child and his family disappeared and none of them have been seen since then. Even after 20 years, no significance progress has been made in this case. The Chinese authorities have continuously refused to reveal any information about him or his family whereabouts. The clichéd statement "he and his family are doing well" is the routine response.

Demise of Tulku Tenzin Delek Rinpoche in Chinese Prison

On July 12, 2015, Tenzin Delek Rinpoche, 65, a highly respected Tibetan Spiritual teacher and one of the most prominent Tibetan political prisoners passed away under suspicious circumstances in prison. He was a philanthropist, known for his social works such as establishing schools, clinics, orphanages, and old-age homes in Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province (eastern Tibet).

Given his leading role in public welfare and efforts in preserving Tibetan Buddhism, the Chinese authorities viewed him as a threat to the "social stability". Along with Lobsang Dhondup, his attendant, he was charged with masterminding a bomb blast in Chengdu, capital of Sichuan Province and sentenced to death. Lobsang was executed on 26 January 2003 and Rinpoche's sentence was commuted to life imprisonment on 24 January 2005 following international protest.

After his death the performance of final ritual according to traditional Tibetan Buddhism was denied. His body was cremated in prison against the wishes of his family and disciples and later his ashes were snatched from his family. In conclusion, we call upon the members of the United Nations Human Rights Council to urge China to:

- To end all its repressive policies and practices in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and adjacent areas where Tibetans live,
- To stop collective punishment on the villagers and family members of the self-immolators,
- To provide verifiable and genuine information on the whereabouts and well-being of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima and his family,
- To allow independent international investigation into the circumstances surrounding the sudden and suspicious death of Tenzin Delek Rinpoche,
- To implement all the recommendations made by the UN mandate holders and treaty bodies on all issues pertaining to the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and adjacent areas where Tibetans live.